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IRAQI AGGRESSION AND THE CONTINUED OCCUPATION OF KUWAIT IN FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-sixth year

Letter dated 4 April 1991 from the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, and in an attempt to assess the damages inflicted on the oil industry in Kuwait, I should like to inform you of the following preliminary assessment of damages to the oil wells:

Out of the 1,080 producing wells in Kuwait, nearly 700 have been badly damaged.

One of the problems is the large-scale danger of mines, unexploded bombs and boobytraps.

With regard to specific fields, out of the 703 wells of the greater Burgan area fields, 365 are on fire. The Burgan area is very dangerous in terms of having unexploded mines and bombs. In the Menagish field, there are 22 wells that are gushing with oil, but not burning. Again, the Menagish area is difficult to access because of the bombs and mines, but the real danger here is that the fields are emitting H_2S gas in a very high concentration. To emphasize, 400 ppm is considered lethal but, in some areas, the concentration has been tested for as high as 20,000 ppm. There is a fear that, depending on the weather, there may be a development of large pockets of H_2S in the air. Additionally, as water seeps into the field, more H_2S is being produced.

In the Magwa field, the number of total wells burning is not yet identified, but there is a large oil spill of eight acres in size coming out from four wells, which is likely to close the main Ahmadi to Magwa road. There is a concern that this oil seepage might catch fire.

Among the potential long-term damages to the wells are the serious water cuts in many of the wells. It is felt that, in six months, most of the wells would face water seepage. As an example, whereas the Burgan crude used to contain a maximum of 2 per cent of water, in some of the flank wells what was gushing out was 100 per cent water and, in other wells, water was coming through faster than oil. Additionally, there would be pressure loss in the reservoirs leading to a build-up of the deposits, which could close or kill some wells. The possibility of severe corrosion at the well tubing is a cause for concern as well.

As indicated, the above is a preliminary list of damages to the oil wells. As to the other sectors of the oil industry, the Kuwaiti Government is in the process of finalizing the assessment of the full extent of the damages to the refineries, tankage farms, loading terminals, pipelines and oil-gathering centres.

I should appreciate it if you would arrange for the text of the present letter to be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 153, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mohammad A. ABULHASAN
Ambassador
Permanent Representative